

This morning I want to speak to you about the passion week of Christ. Today millions of Christians around the world are gathering together on this resurrection Sunday morning to celebrate the atoning work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who gave his life as a ransom for all who will believe, who will place their trust in him as their only hope of salvation.

And as I thought about this morning, I was struck with the reality that many Christians understand the general facts about the death and burial and resurrection of our Lord, but I fear the profound significance of our Lord's life and ministry, especially as they unfold in the final week that led up to our Lord's crucifixion, are largely unknown to many believers.

Therefore, I wish to step away from our normal verse by verse exposition of a particular text and I want to take you this morning on a historical journey, a journey with Jesus through his public as well as his private ministries that were ultimately designed to take him to the cross. I want to give you the big picture, if you will, a picture of all that God intended for Christ to do in his ministry that would lead him to the cross, to rise from the dead, and to ascend back into glory. And after some big picture history that will explain his final journey to Jerusalem, I wish to put into perspective five events that occurred during the passion week of Christ, and I think that these will help us better grasp the staggering reality of Christ's voluntary death on the cross and his glorious resurrection.

We will examine, finally, his messianic presentation, proclamation, preparation, propitiation and pronouncement. It is my prayer that these truths will deepen your understanding of the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ that we might worship him more deeply and serve him more fully.

First of all some background, history of Jesus' ministry.

Jesus began his public ministry after 30 years of living in obscurity, and ultimately his ministry lasted about three and a half years. The first two and a half years you might think of as a public presentation of the Messiah, and that really began with the ministry of the forerunner, John the Baptist, who announced the coming king, the arrival of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. That public presentation lasted for about three to five months, and during this two and a half year period Jesus sought crowds, he worked countless miracles, and he travelled through the land primarily inhabited by the Jews saturating the land with his claim to be the Messiah, King of Israel and to be the incarnate Son of God. And, of course, he validated those claims with countless miracles.

He began in Judea by cleansing the temple in Jerusalem during Passover season and he remained there about eight months. And it was during that time that John the Baptist was arrested and because of the anger towards Jesus, Jesus departed from the area of Judea and went into Galilee passing through Samaria on the way where he dealt with the woman at the well.

Then he spent about 18 months in Galilee. Keep in mind that this is where most of the Jews lived, up in the Galilee. There, again, he sought the crowds. He made his claim to be

their Messiah, God in the flesh and worked many miracles. But despite the irrefutable truths of his claim, validated by those miracles, Israel rejected his offer of the kingdom.

Now, you must understand that during this time Jesus discerned their unbelief. But the disciples did not. During that period he experienced the official rejection of the leaders of Israel. We read about that, for example, in Matthew 12 and the discussion of the unpardonable sin. But also there was the popular rejection of the people that occurred about that time and you read about that in John six after the feeding of the 5000. It was at that time that most people withdrew from him and refused to walk with him anymore. It was at that point that Jesus then shifted from a public presentation to a private preparation. This lasted about a year. During the first six months he sought privacy. He avoided doing miracles that attracted the multitudes. In fact, he fled from areas populated by the Jews and he began to travel through non-Jewish territories like Syrophenicia and Decapolis and Caesarea Philippi and so forth. This was a time of training for the 12.

He had been speaking openly and plainly, but at this point now he begins to speak in parables. And towards the end of this period Jesus finds solitude with his apostles and he openly foretells of his death for the first time. Of course this was a shock to them, very confusing, so at that point Jesus began to encourage his forlorn apostles, reinforcing their wavering faith. And to help with all of that Jesus is transfigured on the mountain before Peter, James and John.

Then the last six months of this private season of preparation, which would have been about six months before his crucifixion, Jesus spent his time in and around Jerusalem. In November he attended the feast of Tabernacles. In December he attended the feast of Dedication. And then he has to flee across the Jordan into Perea to avoid being captured because it was not yet his time. Then it was at that point that the sister of Lazarus sent for him, and in February Jesus goes to the village of Bethany just outside Jerusalem where he raises Lazarus from the dead. This would have been about six to eight weeks before the passion week of Christ that would lead up to his crucifixion.

Now this miracle absolutely electrified the Jews. It was just overwhelming to them and Jesus intended it so. This really set up his triumphal entry that would follow this miracle. After this miracle Jesus once again found seclusion in Ephraim, a little wilderness village north of Jerusalem a few miles. And there he remained hidden from his enemies until he makes his final trip to Jerusalem for the Passover. No one knew where Jesus was during that time, but according to John 11:56 they were all asking the question, "What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?"¹ You see, the Jews were looking for their Messiah to come and to overthrow Rome and they were convinced that somehow Jesus was that Messiah. Meanwhile the Jewish leaders had committed themselves to murdering him, come what may.

Then Jesus left Ephraim with his disciples and took a rather lengthy route traveling again across the Jordan into Perea travelling along the Jordan rift where he could accompany the pilgrims that were making their way to Jerusalem along that route in order to avoid

¹ John 11:56.

going through the dreaded land of the Samaritans. He is now making his final journey up to Jerusalem for the Passover feast where he will ultimately be the Passover Lamb. He once again takes up the mantle of Messiah very publicly. He resumes, once again, his miraculous ministries and he resumes his teaching ministries. And during that time he is openly confrontational with the Pharisees.

On the way he heals 10 lepers, he preaches the imminence of the coming of the kingdom of God, he preaches concerning divorce and concerning the children and the kingdom of God. You will recall he challenged the rich young ruler during that time of the danger of riches. But he would not agree and he went away empty handed, refusing to follow the Messiah. And it was also during this time that he privately speaks to his apostles, and clearly foretells of his death and of his resurrection. He rebukes James and John for their selfish ambition during this time and then finally he crosses the Jordan back into Judea and enters into Jericho where he heals blind Bartimaeus and his companions. And then you will recall Jesus invites a little tax collector named Zacchaeus to faith in him and Zacchaeus is radically converted.

Then in Luke 19 verses 11 through 27, knowing that the fickle Jews thought that he was about to establish their long awaited kingdom, Jesus gives them the parable of the pounds that deliberately dispels that notion. Now, remember, the Jews were expecting them to save them from Rome and they did not understand their need for him to save them first from their sin. They could not grasp the idea of two separate comings separated by a long period of time, an undisclosed period of time. They could not understand that although the mediatorial Old Testament kingdom was really there with Christ, that it was at hand as the Lord had announced, they could not understand that because of their unbelief the fullness of messianic blessing promised to Israel would have to wait until the king's second coming. The nation must now suffer many years of judgment for its unbelief.

Finally Jesus and the apostles make their way back to Bethany where he had previously raised Lazarus from the dead and in John 12:1; we read that he arrives on Saturday, six days before the Passover. There Jesus is welcomed by Lazarus, by Mary and Martha, and we read that a number of people in Bethany provide a feast for him. It was at that point that Mary anointed Jesus and Jesus rebuked Judas. I should say, first, Judas rebuked her but then Judas defended Mary and rebuked Judas. And, of course, this was the final straw for Judas, so he devises his sinister plot to betray Jesus.

While in Bethany with his friends, Jesus prepared himself for what was about to happen. And on Sunday, the first day of the week, the crowds once again gathered around the house of Lazarus according to John 12:9 to see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead. Keep in mind, word had spread like wild fire about what had happened. So people were absolutely electric with excitement. Obviously Lazarus was a living testimony of Jesus' supernatural power and, thus, validated his claim to be both God in the flesh as well as the long awaited Messiah of Israel.

And so, as you can begin to see by sovereign design, the crowd is now excited. Jesus has deliberately laid the groundwork to communicate to everyone, both friend and foe that he was coming into Jerusalem for the Passover. Of course the crowds were certain, again, that Jesus was the Messiah, that he was going to establish their long promised millennial kingdom.

Now with that historical overview, as general as it was, this leads us now to the passion week of Christ and first we discover his messianic presentation, number one.

On the next day, as the crowds made their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover and coronate their Messiah King, Jesus and his apostles make their way into Jerusalem. So it was more likely Monday than the traditional Palm Sunday, after Jesus had been in Bethany with Lazarus that he made his way through the eastern gate of Jerusalem.

According to John 12:12 we read:

On the next day the great multitude who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took the branches of the palm trees, and went out to meet Him, and began to cry out, "Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel."²

I might add that a Monday triumphal entry is also very important because according to Exodus chapter 12 verses two through six we read that the Mosaic law required sacrificial lambs to be selected for passover on the 10th day of the first month. This was time for them to take the lamb into their home and to become familiar with it, to frankly fall in love with it and then to sacrifice it on the 14th. Only a Monday triumphal entry would fulfill this important symbolism because the year Jesus was crucified the 10th of Nisan was on the Monday of the Passover week. So this would allow the Jews nationally to select Jesus as their Passover lamb to, shall we say, symbolically invite him into their hearts and homes and love him and then sacrifice him on the Friday the 14th of Nisan.

Now, this amazing event of the Lord's triumphal entry was no surprise to Jesus as some would have us believe. Quite the contrary, according to Scripture it was sovereignly orchestrated even in eternity past. In fact, 600 years before, the very day that the Lord Jesus the Messiah would present himself was actually predicted by the Holy Spirit who revealed it to the prophet Daniel—the precise date that it would happen, though Daniel didn't even fully understand it.

In Daniel chapter nine and verse 25 we learn that from the time of Artaxerxes decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Prince, there will be seven weeks and 62 weeks. Literally, 62 sevens; seven referring to weeks of years.

So if you add that up, seven weeks equals 49 years and then 62 weeks is 434 years. So you have 49 years plus 434 years which equals 483 years, literally 69 sevens. So, bottom

² John 12:12-13.

line, 483 years after Artaxerxes' decree to Nehemiah, the Messiah, the Prince was presented to the Jewish nation on April 10th, 30 AD.

Likewise, the manner of our Lord's triumphal yet humble entry was predicted 500 years earlier through the prophet Zechariah. Zechariah chapter 9:9 the text that Matthew quotes we read, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey."³

Beloved, even the manner of the Lord's triumphal entry is here prophesied. But I would also add that the meaning of the Messiah's king... the Messiah King's presentation had been foretold in Psalm 118. Beginning in verse 21 we read:

I shall give thanks to Thee, for Thou hast answered me; And Thou hast become my salvation. The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone. This is the LORD'S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it. O LORD, do save, we beseech Thee; O LORD, we beseech Thee, do send prosperity! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD; We have blessed you from the house of the LORD. The LORD is God, and He has given us light; Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar. Thou art my God, and I give thanks to Thee; Thou art my God, I extol Thee. Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.⁴

And, of course, these were the very words spoken in praise by the multitudes as Jesus entered into Jerusalem. But knowing their ultimate rejection of him as their Savior, Christ announced that ultimately the fulfillment of those promises would not occur until his Second Coming as we read in Matthew 23.

So the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah King approaches Jerusalem. Imagine now the crowds are swelling in size. People are clamoring to come and to see the Messiah king and to see what is about to happen. They are frenzied with anticipation and hey are shouting according to Luke 19:38, "BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"⁵ And then Luke tells us that some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples!"⁶ But Jesus answered, "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!"⁷

But then in verse 41 Luke records a stunning event that puts this whole scene into perspective. As Jesus approaches the city we discover that he weeps aloud over their

³ Zechariah 9:9.

⁴ Psalm 118:21-29.

⁵ Luke 19:38.

⁶ Luke 19:39.

⁷ Luke 19:40.

unbelief and their rejection of their king. He does not enter the city with joy, but with immense sorrow with his tears flowing down his cheeks. And Luke records this in Luke 19 beginning in verse 41.

And when He approached, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will throw up a bank before you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."⁸

This was literally fulfilled a few years later on April 9th, 70 AD when Titus laid siege in that summer to Jerusalem and slowly starved the inhabitants. The Romans systematically, then, slaughtered them, attacking one part of the city at a time and many of these same people that praised Jesus were lost in that slaughter. Ultimately the temple was totally destroyed and they took the remaining captives to Rome to be mocked and to be butchered especially in the Roman circus and the gladiatorial bouts.

So on Monday Jesus approaches Jerusalem and he is approaching it purposely, purposefully. He is approaching it voluntarily. He is being obedient to the Father's will. Ultimately he is going to the cross to offer himself officially as the sacrificial lamb. But as he comes into the city he is offering himself to the people officially and finally as the king of the messianic kingdom, exactly as the Old Testament prophets had predicted.

After he enters, he then returns quietly once again to Bethany. But on the next day he returns once again to Jerusalem. This leads us to the second thing that we witness in the passion week and that is his messianic proclamation. You see, early Tuesday morning Jesus and the 12 approach the city. And it was on that approach, you will recall, that he cursed the barren fig tree. Remember in Matthew 21 verse 19 we read, Jesus said, "'No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you.' And at once the fig tree withered."⁹

Of course, that was symbolic of the judgment that would soon fall upon Israel because they, like that leafy tree had the pretense of offering fruit but, in fact, they were barren. They did not produce fruit in keeping with repentance as Jesus spoke of in Matthew 3:8. So he enters Jerusalem. The crowds are screaming. They are so excited. Thousands of pilgrims now are preparing for the Passover. And what does Jesus do? He enters the temple and he cleanses it. And, beloved, we read that for two days he rules the precincts of the temple. He literally claims possession of the temple as the mighty sovereign.

Can you imagine the reaction of the Jews, especially the leaders? You see, the Pharisees were already infuriated with him because of all that he had done to them. They were the leaders of the common people, but now Jesus was in the realm of the Sadducees that ran

⁸ Luke 19:41-44.

⁹ Mathew 21:19.

the temple. This was like the mafia. This is how they made their money. And now Jesus takes possession of it and they are afraid to do anything with him for fear that the crowds who are so fond of him would destroy them. Well, during this time every stratum of official Judaism verbally attacked Jesus, trying to embarrass him in front of the multitudes so that they would turn away from him. But, instead, he embarrassed them with his answers. He even rebuked them opening because of their ignorance of Scripture.

And then, to top it all off he pronounced judgment on Israel. During this time he appealed to David in Psalm 10 to once again prove his claim to be the Messiah. And in his last public discourse he denounced the scribes and the Pharisees in a series of woes that you read about in Matthew 23. And then he comments on the widow's mite that we read about in Luke 21 that even further demonstrated the blasphemy of their works righteousness system. Again, were it not for Jesus' popularity with the multitudes, they would have seized him right there on the spot, but it was too risky. Also there had to have been something about the presence of the Savior that was incredibly intimidating to any mere human being.

Well, as they left the city on Wednesday night they ascended once again the Mount of Olives. They are making their way back to the home of Lazarus in Bethany. That was like the retreat headquarters during this time. And as we read the Scriptures we see as they ascended the Mount of Olives, as they reached the summit they were able to look back over the city and to see the temple and all that was there, the temple that had been built by Herod. And then Jesus said to his disciples, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down."¹⁰

Hearing that, of course, the disciples were curious and they asked him, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"¹¹ And, beloved, his answer was the longest answer in Scripture regarding future things. It is what we call the Olivet Discourse. You read it in Matthew 24 and 25, an answer concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, concerning his Second Coming and specifically the conditions and the signs that would precede his coming in power and great glory.

Then Thursday afternoon Jesus and the 12 reenter the city. This now brings us to number three, his messianic preparation. First preparation is made for the Passover and we were reminded of that this morning as we came to the table. There was preparation made for this Passover meal in a private room that they had obtained earlier. This would become what is commonly called the last supper. And as evening approached, which would have been Jewish Friday, the supper began with a dispute among the disciples regarding who would be greatest in the kingdom.

It sounds just like us, doesn't it? This was probably precipitated by the seating arrangement. They typically would sit in kind of a U shape and somebody didn't get to sit probably where they thought they should, and here we go. During that time Jesus rebuked

¹⁰ Matthew 24:2.

¹¹ Matthew 24:3.

them and he reminded them that the greatest leader and the true leader must become like a servant. Then to illustrate this, Jesus, the honored guest, assumed the role of the lowliest servant and he washed their feet. And during this meal, then, Jesus exposed Judas as the betrayer. Judas departs. Of course, Judas had already made arrangements with the Sanhedrin to betray Jesus, an event that would now take place just a few hours later. And so now the drama of Jesus' death is fully set into motion.

At this point Jesus announces his departure to the 11 and John records this in chapter 13 verse 31. Jesus says, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him."¹²

And in verse 33 he says these precious words.

Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You shall seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, I now say to you also, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.¹³

At this point Peter voiced his undying allegiance and devotion to Christ and Jesus responded to Peter by saying that, "Instead of being devoted to me, you are going to deny me three times." At this point in the chronology, as we try to harmonize the gospels, we see that the Lord's supper is instituted, and after a final farewell discourse to his disciples, he departs with the 11 for the Garden of Gethsemane.

Somewhere near the garden Jesus offers a prayer of self consecration, of thanksgiving and intercession. We read about it in John 17 called the high priestly prayer. They then enter the garden and Jesus leaves eight of his disciples at the entrance and he takes the other inner three with him into the inner recesses of that enclosed place. And, of course, Jesus' agony in the garden was so intense the disciples could not watch him. There in unimaginable anguish our precious Savior sweat drops of blood and three times he asked the Father, "If it is possible, let this cup from me, nevertheless, not my will, but thy will be done."

Then in the middle of the night as Jesus emerged from the garden three remarkable events occurred. First, Judas betrays him with a kiss, then the Sanhedrinists arrest him and his disciples abandon him in fear. Only Peter and John follow him from a distance as he is taken to the house of the high priest Caiaphas.

It is still well before dawn on Friday and now Jesus will undergo a series of mock trials by the Jewish leadership that absolutely violated every principle of jurisprudence and justice that the Jews were so proud of. They spat on him, the buffeted him. We read that they would blind fold him and then somebody would strike him and challenge him, "If you are a prophet, tell us who hit you." Knowing the outcome had already been determined long before the trial commenced, we read that Jesus was silent during all of

¹² John 13:31.

¹³ John 13:33-35.

this until the very end when he did acknowledge that he was the Son of God. And, of course, this was a statement of such blasphemy that it was worthy of death to the Jews, although it was true.

So just after dawn Jesus is formally condemned by the Sanhedrin. He is taken immediately to the Roman procurator Pilate who interrogates him and finds no fault in him. But ultimately to keep peace with the outraged Jews he capitulates to their demands and he releases the criminal Barabbas in exchange for Jesus, and he has Jesus scourged in hopes that somehow that blood letting would appease them. But it was to no avail. So reluctantly Pilate turned Jesus over to be crucified as the rival king of Caesar.

So between the hours of six and nine AM on Friday morning the Roman soldiers made sport of him. They mocked him. They placed a crown of thorns upon his head. They escorted Jesus to Golgotha. There he was offered a narcotic that he refused. And there, beloved, between two thieves the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified.

This brings us to the fourth thing that we witness during the passion week, and that is the Messianic propitiation. In 1 John 4:10 we read, “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”¹⁴ To propitiate means to appease or to placate or to satisfy. In the original language it is **HILASMOS** (hil-as-mos’). In fact, the **HILASTERION** (hil-as-tay’-ree-on) means a place where satisfaction occurs, a place of propitiation, literally a sacrifice of atonement.

Now let me give you some background. In the Old Testament tabernacle and the temple later on, in the holy of holies we learn that no one would dare enter that inner sanctuary that housed the ark of the covenant except the high priest one time a year on **YOM KIPPUR** (yome kip-poor’), the Day of Atonement.

And inside that ark, that box made of gold according to Exodus 25, was the covenant, the law of Moses, the holy standard, the Sinaiatic covenant that has been violated. Above the ark on each end stood the golden cherubs with outstretched wings that would guard the holiness of God. And between the cherubs would hover the glorious shekinah, that ineffable dazzling light of the presence of God, a light too brilliant to be seen by the fallen eyes of man.

But, dear friends, there was a lid on top of that ark, a golden lid that separated the law from the holy presence above, the law that had been violated. And the reason why is because man could never enter into the presence of God having violated that law unless something happened. You see, that golden lid of separation had staggering implications for every sinner who wants to be reconciled to a holy God, to have peace with God. For on that lid divine justice and grace would come together symbolically when the high priest would spring the blood of the animal once per year to make atonement for the sins of Israel. And, dear friends, that mercy seat, that lid, according to the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament was called the **HILASTERION** (hil-as-tay’-ree-

¹⁴ 1 John 4:10.

on), the place of atonement, the place where the just wrath of God was symbolically propitiated, where God's fury was temporarily appeased, where his anger was symbolically satisfied and the vengeance of God upon sinners was placated.

In Exodus 25 verse 21 we read:

You shall put the mercy seat [again, the **HILASTHRION** (hil-as-tay'-ree-on)] on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony.¹⁵

Now, understand that the Old Testament sacrificial system ultimately pointed to this glorious day of final propitiation when the Lord Jesus Christ would be the perfect sacrifice. And to think that God himself provided the means to appease his own wrath. That is an inconceivable thought to me. Beloved, herein is the love of God.

So back to Jesus. During the first three hours upon the cross from nine AM to noon, Jesus spoke three times. First he had a word of compassion for his enemies when he said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."¹⁶ Secondly, he had a word of compassion for the repentant thief. He said, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."¹⁷ And, thirdly, he had a word of compassion for his mother when he said, "Woman, behold thy son!"¹⁸ and even to John, "Behold thy mother!"¹⁹

And then, dear friends, at noon darkness fell upon the earth that lasted until 3 PM. During that time Jesus spoke four more times. First there was a cry of unimaginable anguish of soul when he experienced spiritual death for the elect and broken communion with the Father when he said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"²⁰ Secondly, there was a cry of agony when he said, "I thirst."²¹ Thirdly, there was a cry of triumph when he said, "It is finished."²² And, finally, there was a cry of commitment when he said, "Father, into thy hands I [commend myself]."²³

And with that, in the darkest hour of history, the Lamb of God exercised his will and he released his soul from his body. This was in keeping with his prior statement recorded in John 10 verse 17 where the Lord said, "I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again."²⁴ Dear friend, make no mistake

¹⁵ Exodus 25:21-22.

¹⁶ Luke 23:34.

¹⁷ Luke 23:43.

¹⁸ John 19:26.

¹⁹ John 19:27.

²⁰ Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

²¹ John 19:28.

²² John 19:30.

²³ Luke 23:46.

²⁴ John 10:17-18.

about it. The Lord Jesus Christ was as sovereign over his death as he was sovereign over his resurrection.

Then at the moment of his death three miraculous phenomena instantly occurred. First, the veil separating the holy place from the holy of holies in the temple was rent from top to bottom demonstrating that God, not man did it. By the way, this was a massive veil. It was 60 feet long, about 30 feet wide, about 30 feet high and it was about six inches in width. It is said that it took several hundred men to move it. It was made up of 72 squares with magnificent embroidery. But, beloved, this signified something so important. It signified that now access into the presence of God was available to all through a new and through a living way.

The second phenomena that occurred was that the earth shook and the rocks were split. Thirdly, the graves in the area around Jerusalem were opened and according to Matthew 27:52 we read that many bodies of saints that slept arose after the resurrection of Christ. And the text says that these went into the city and appeared to many.

Before sundown, then, the Roman soldiers came to break the legs of the victims to hasten their death. But they discovered Jesus was already dead. As further proof they pierced his side. And then two courageous Sanhedrenists, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea came to identify with Jesus and claim his body for burial and he was laid in a garden tomb nearby. At the request of the chief priests and the Pharisees, Pilate agreed to seal the tomb and to station a guard around it. So Jesus was buried sometime before sundown on Friday and there his body laid all day Saturday which was the Jewish sabbath. And then, dear friends, just before sunrise the Lord Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead.

This brings us now to the final aspect of the passion week. We have seen the messianic propitiation is now finished and, finally, we see the messianic pronouncement. Let me read it to you in Matthew 28 verse one.

Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you."²⁵

Beloved, herein is the messianic pronouncement, proof that Jesus was, indeed, God in flesh.

²⁵ Matthew 28:1-7.

May I remind you, speaking of the divine sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul tells us in Romans chapter one verse four that he “was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead”²⁶ Declared, **HORIZO** (hor-id’-zo) in the original language. We get our English word horizon from that. It carries the basic idea of marking off a boundary or a limit of a place or a thing. In fact, the English word speaks of the demarcation between the earth and the sky as we would look at the horizon. It is the idea of determining and distinguishing and defining something. And, beloved, Paul’s point was very simple. The most irrefutable and compelling declaration that Jesus Christ was the Son of God is the astounding event of his glorious resurrection. Only God himself can give life and only God can conquer death.

Beloved, in his resurrection from the dead God declared that he was, indeed, the Son of God. His resurrection is therefore the messianic pronouncement.

I close this morning by inviting all of you to come as the angel did, as the angel said, “Come and see the place where he is lying.”

In your mind, won’t you take a moment and look and see that the stone has been rolled away from the sacred sepulcher. Won’t you join with me and enter into the empty tomb and gaze upon the slab where the Savior once lay. And you see he is not there. He is risen from the dead as he promised. The God man who was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief is not there. Why? Because his work is finished. And now he sits at the right hand of the Father.

And, dear friend, mark it. One day he is going to return and every man is going to see him. The question is: When you see him, will you see him as the risen Savior in whom you have placed your trust for salvation or will you see him as your righteous judge who will damn you for eternity because you refuse to repent and to confess him as Savior and Lord?

May God have mercy on our souls.

Let’s pray together.

Father, thank you for these glorious truths that remind us of your infinite love for us. May we take them and use them to convict our hearts, especially for those that do not know you. Oh, Lord, would today be the day that they confess you as Savior and start serving you as the Lord of their life. And, Lord, for those of us who know and love you, may these truths remind us afresh of the infinite love that is ours through Christ Jesus and therefore motivate us to worship you more deeply and to serve you more fully. I pray all this in the precious name of Jesus and for his sake. Amen.

²⁶ Romans 1:4.

We pray you have been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to pastor, Bible teacher and author David Harrell. For more information or to order additional tapes or CDs of pastor Harrell's messages, please visit OliveTreeResources.org.

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